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 C O N F I D E N T I A L

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TEGUCIGALPA 04936

E.O. 12356: N/A
 TAGS: SCOM, HO, MARR, OREP
 SUBJECT: PROPOSED RESPONSE TO QUERY UH-1 INCIDENT

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 4931

1. THIS MESSAGE FORWARDS PROPOSED RESPONSE TO QUERIES CONCERNING THE UH-1 INCIDENT. Q'S AND A'S CONCERNING INVESTIGATORY PROCESS REFLECT OUR DESIRE THAT THE INCIDENT RECEIVE THE SAME INVESTIGATION TREATMENT BY USSOUTHCOM AS DID THE OH-58 INCIDENT.
2. FOLLOWING ARE PROPOSED Q'S AND A'S:

Q-1 WHERE DID THE FIRE COME FROM?

A-1 THE FIRE WAS RECEIVED AS THE HELICOPTERS APPROACHED THE REFUGEE CAMP NEAR THE BORDER.

Q-2 DID THE HELICOPTER CROSS THE BORDER INTO EL SALVADO

A-2 WHEN FIRED UPON, THE HELICOPTERS WERE APPROACHING THE REFUGEE CAMP AT COLOMONCAGUA WHICH IS SITUATED NEAR THE BORDER. THE INVESTIGATION WILL ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THE QUESTION OF THE PRECISE LOCATION OF THE HELICOPTERS WHEN FIRED UPON.

Q-3 DOES THIS MEAN YOU ARE NOT RULING OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE BORDER WAS CROSSED?

A-3 AS STATED EARLIER, THE INVESTIGATION WILL ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE THE PRECISE LOCATION OF THE HELICOPTERS WHEN FIRED UPON ON THEIR FLIGHT PATH FROM MARCALA TO COLOMONCAGUA HONDURAS.

Q-4 WHO DID THE FIRING? WHAT KIND OF FIRE WAS IT?

A-4 THE WEAPONS FIRE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTED AT THE HELICOPTERS BY SALVADORAN COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS KNOWN TO OPERATE IN THE ILL-DEFINED BORDER AREA. WE KNOW THAT THE SALVADORAN GUERRILLAS HAVE ALSO CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACK ON RADIO VENCEREMOS. THE

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FIRE WAS REPORTED TO BE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE OF UNDETERMINED CALIBER AT THIS POINT. A PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION INDICATES THE SENATORS' HELICOPTER WAS STRUCK BY THREE ROUNDS.

Q-5 WHO IS DOING THE INVESTIGATION?

A-5 THE USSOUTHCOM INSPECTOR GENERAL WILL CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INCIDENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES, A SEPARATE INVESTIGATION WILL ALSO BE CONDUCTED BY THE U.S. ARMY AIRCRAFT INCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARD.

Q-6 CAN WE PHOTOGRAPH THE HELICOPTER? WHERE IS IT?

A-6 THE SENATORS' HELICOPTER WAS LATER FLOWN FROM MARCALA ON 18 APRIL TO THE JTF-A AREA AT PALMEROLA. THERE WILL BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PHOTOGRAPH THE HELICOPTER AT 1:30 P.M. ON 19 APRIL AT PALMEROLA.

Q-7 WHO WILL BE THE INVESTIGATION OFFICER?

A-7 THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER WILL BE CAPTAIN FRED C. BROCKHAUSEN, U.S. NAVY, INSPECTOR GENERAL, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND, PANAMA.

Q-8 TO WHAT UNIT WERE THE UH-1 HELICOPTERS ASSIGNED AND WHAT IS THEIR HOME STATION?

A-8 THE HELICOPTERS ARE ASSIGNED TO THE EIGHTEENTH HELICOPTER COMPANY, FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA. THE UNIT DEPLOYED TO HONDURAS IN FEBRUARY AS PART OF JOINT TASK FORCE - ALPHA

Q-9 HOW MANY HELICOPTERS DOES THE UNIT HAVE?

A-9 EIGHT UH-1H TRANSPORT HELICOPTERS. ALSO ASSIGNED TO JTF-ALPHA ARE 3 UH-1H MEDEVAC HELICOPTERS. IN ADDITION, FROM TWO TO FOUR U.S. ARMY UH-47 HELICOPTERS HAVE NORMALLY BEEN ATTACHED TO THE UNIT FROM PANAMA TO SUPPORT EXERCISE ACTIVITIES.

Q-10 WHO WERE THE PILOTS? CAN WE INTERVIEW THEM?

A-10 THE IDENTITY OF THE CREWMEMBERS IS BEING WITHHELD PENDING THE COMPLETION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE INVESTIGATORY PROCESS AND BASED ON THEIR INDIVIDUAL DESIRES. ANY SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEWS WILL BE AN INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION.

Q-11 DOESN'T THE VISIT TO THE REFUGEE CAMP NEAR THE BORDER VIOLATE RULES FOR U.S. EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS TO

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REMAIN FIVE MILES FROM A BORDER AREA?

A-11 THE REFUGEE CAMP IS APPROXIMATELY FIVE KILOMETERS OR THREE MILES FROM THE BORDER. WHILE A SELF-IMPOSED FIVE MILE RESTRICTION IS A CONTROL MEASURE TO PRECLUDE INCIDENTS INVOLVING EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS, HONDURAS IS A COUNTRY AT PEACE. THE JOINT TASK FORCE HAS ROUTINELY ACCOMMODATED REQUESTS BY OFFICIAL VISITORS WHO DESIRE TO INCLUDE THE COLOMONCAGUA REFUGEE CAMP AS A STOP DURING THEIR VISIT ITINERARY. THE VISITS ARE MADE WITH THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT AND COORDINATION WITH THE UNHCR.

Q-12 WAS THERE ANY RELATION TO THIS INCIDENT AND THE OH-58 HELICOPTER SHOT DOWN BY NICARAGUAN FORCES ON JANUARY 11?

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A-12 ONLY IN THAT THE HELICOPTERS WERE UNARMED AND ON ROUTINE MISSIONS. WE BELIEVE AT THIS POINT THE SENATORS HELICOPTERS WERE OVER HONDURAN TERRITORY WHEN ATTACKED. YOU WILL RECALL THAT THE OH-58 PILOT WAS KILLED WHILE HE WAS ON HONDURAN SOIL.

Q-13 WHO WERE THE PASSENGERS ON EACH HELICOPTER?

A-13 THE PARTY INCLUDED SENATORS JOHNSTON AND CHILES, SENATE STAFFERS RICHARD COLLINS AND DOUGLAS OLIN, U.S. EMBASSY AND MILITARY ESCORT OFFICERS, THE WIFE OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO HONDURAS, DIANA NEGROPONTE, EMBASSY SECURITY PERSONNEL AND A HONDURAN ARMY LIAISON OFFICER.
Q-14 WHAT WAS THE SENATOR'S ITINERARY BEFORE AND AFTER THE COLOMONCAGUA VISIT?

A-14 THE GROUP EARLIER VISITED PALMEROLA AND THEN STOPPED AT MARCALA TO PICK UP A HONDURAN ARMY LIAISON OFFICER PRIOR TO PROCEEDING TO THE COLOMONCAGUA REFUGEE CAMP, WHICH WAS THEIR LAST SCHEDULED VISIT IN HONDURAS. FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT, THE PARTY MADE A PRECAUTIONARY LANDING AT MARCALA BEFORE CONTINUING TO PALMEROLA AND TONCONTIN TO RESUME THEIR ITINERARY TO PANAMA.

Q-15 HOW LONG WILL THE SOUTHCOM INVESTIGATION TAKE? WILL A REPORT BE RELEASED?

A-15 AN ESTIMATED TWO WEEKS WILL BE REQUIRED FOR THE INVESTIGATION AND A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF INVESTIGATION IS EXPECTED TO BE MADE AVAILABLE FOLLOWING THE INVESTIGATION. NEGROPONTE
END OF MESSAGE

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